

REMARKS

Claim Status

Claims 1-14 and 76 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1 and 76 have been amended in step (d) to recite that “the” document is locked instead of “a” document to clarify that it is the same document of the prior steps is referred to in step (d). Antecedent support in the specification can be found at page 11, lines 1-12.

Claim 76 have also been amended in the preamble to mirror the preamble language of Claim 1 and to refer to instructions for “developing a technical standard in a process of product development...”. Antecedent basis can be found in Claim 1 and in the specification at page 2, lines 24-25.

Claim 76 has also been amended to add the language “which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform the steps”, which is implicit within the originally presented claim but is now made explicit in response to a suggestion at pages 10-11 of the Office Action. Further basis for the amendment can be found in the specification at page 13, lines 12-19 and page 14, line 23-30.

No new matter is believed to be added. No additional claims fee is believed to be due.

Claim Rejections

Claim Rejections – 35 USC 112

Claims 1-14 and 76 have been rejected under 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph as being indefinite.

In response, Claims 1 and 76 have been amended in step (d) of each to replace “a” document with “the” document, consistent with suggestions made in the Office Action.

Claim 76 has also been amended in the preamble to recite language that mirrors the preamble of Claim 1 in order to overcome the Office Action’s rejection based on the previous reference to a method of specifying a product. The revised preamble refers to a method for developing a technical standard in a process for product development. Applicants submit that this language is consistent with the remaining body of the claim.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC 103(a)

(1) Claims 1-14 and 76 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over AAPA (Applicant Admitted Prior Art) in view of Grainger (US 2002/0111824) and Parks (US 6,038,573).

Applicants traverse the pending rejection. The cited art does not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, Applicants' process wherein a technical standard comprising (in part):

- ...electronically circulating a document ... to a review group; (step b)
- electronically locking the document ... (in a manner that allows a process owner to unlock it if necessary for a subsequent review process), (step d)
- circulating the locked document ... to an approval group, (step e)
- rendering the locked document...unchangeable...once...approved...(step g)

The Office Action relies on Parks for teaching steps (d) and (g), which are acknowledged in the Office Action to be not taught in any of the other cited references. The Office Action's reading and interpretation of Parks is incorrect. Parks does not disclose, teach or suggest the present inventions dual stage locking and document integrity program - and in particular does not teach or suggest such a method for use in a multi-step document review and approval process as claimed by Applicants for technical standards.

In particular, the Office Action cites Parks, Column 9, line 63 to Column 10, line 10. This section reads in relevant part:

The LOCKED attribute is optional. The LOCKED attribute, if present, indicates that the news story document had been locked by a user. A User may restrict access to a news story document by locking it in several ways. If the value of the LOCKED attribute is passed, then access is granted to users that can supply the correct password. If the value of the LOCKED attribute is user, then access is granted to the news story document only to the user who locked the news story document. If the LOCKED attribute is not present, the news story document is not locked.

The document locking that is referred to in this text corresponds most closely to Applicants' step of electronically locking of the technical standards document (step d) because the system allows the access to at least the user that has locked the document 9and potentially others who have access to the password). However there is no reference to rendering the locked document unchangeable.

The Office Action also cites Parks at Column 11, lines 29-34. The text to this section reads in pertinent part as follows:

The RO (*read only*) attribute is optional. A FORM can be either read-write or read-only, depending on the behavior inherited from a parent element. A FORM may override the read-write access by specifying the RO attribute. (*italics added*)

It is well known that applying read only access to a document is not synonymous with rendering the document unchangeable. Read only access is simply a common way of a user or document owner locking a document so that others cannot easily modify it, however conventional software programs that have this function allow the document owner to unlock the document as well as allow other document users to unlock the document if they are supplied with a password. This is in distinct contrast with the present invention's step of rendering a document unchangeable. Once a document is rendered unchangeable in the present invention, no person (including even the document owner) may modify the document.

Flexibility to allow the document to be modified during certain steps of the review and approval process, coupled with the very high standard of integrity for the final, approved document, are important benefits of the present invention. High document and system integrity standards are important attributes of a system that is relied upon for development of technical specifications and standards in product development, as the documents created may be relied upon for a variety of legal and regulatory purposes. The cited disclose methods for workflow in the generation of patents (Grainger) and writing of news stories (Parks). In the management of workflow for the patenting process, the final document is officially filed at a patent office. There is no need to render the final document "unchangeable" within the confines of the users system since the final document is on record at the patent office. Similarly, in the development of a new story, the final document is published in a news paper or the like. That publication becomes the final record of the approved-for-publication document. No such analogy exists for

technical standards generated in the product development process. Although the product may be marketed and sold, the specifications typically remain internally held by the manufacturer.

There is no disclosure of the need filled by Applicant's invention in either of these cited references, nor is there any suggestion to modify AAPA in a manner that provides the claimed invention. Further, as explained above, even if the cited art were to be combined as proposed in the Office Action, the combination still does not provide all of the elements of Applicants' invention.

(2) Claims 1-14 and 76 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over AAPA (Applicant Admitted Prior Art) in view of Grainger (US 2002/0111824), Parks (US 6,038,573), and Jeffrey (US 6,957,384).

This rejection is based on essentially the same arguments as the above-discussed rejection, with the addition of Jeffrey which was cited to show automatic attachment of comments and attachments to a draft document. Nothing in Jeffrey overcomes the arguments set forth above with respect to patentability.

Conclusion

In light of the above amendments and remarks, it is requested that the Examiner withdraw the pending rejections and objections. Favorable action in the case is respectfully requested.

This response represents an earnest effort to place the application in proper form and to distinguish the invention as now claimed from the applied references. In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of this application, entry of the amendments presented herein, and allowance of Claims 1-14 and 76 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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